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President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

Agenda item 10 (*continued*)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1)

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to consider the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1). I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report, in view of its importance in the current unstable international circumstances, which require further concerted and sincere efforts to face the great challenges to peace, security and development.

We endorse the statement of the Secretary-General before this Assembly on the work of the Organization, where he stated, regarding the need for a commitment to international law and the United Nations Charter in promoting the rule of law and for curbing the use of sheer force against the weak, "Those who seek to bestow legitimacy must themselves embody it; and those who invoke international law must themselves submit to it." We agree with all those who believe that this Organization is an indispensable forum for the international community to deal with grave challenges and threats, and we view this Organization as the best place to promote multilateralism and the rule of law in order to be able to bring about a world of justice, equality and prosperity.

The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization is comprehensive and it defines all the important issues considered by the United Nations previously. Some of those have been solved, and some are still awaiting international consensus. One example, and a source of concern for my delegation, is the issue of the Middle East, which is almost as old as the United Nations itself, but for which a just and comprehensive settlement has not yet been achieved.

In paragraph 20, the report states, "the peace process remained stalled and violence persisted". I believe that this can be attributed to the lack of will of a particular party to the conflict, that is Israel, to find a comprehensive settlement, to which we all aspire.

The report of the Secretary-General places importance on realizing a just and comprehensive peace. In this regard Syria reaches out for the realization of a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the Madrid peace framework and the Arab Peace Initiative, in a manner that would restore the occupied Arab territories in Golan, Palestine and Lebanon to their owners. The report, in paragraph 21, alludes to Security Council resolutions on the Middle East and other resolutions adopted by the General Assembly at its resumed tenth emergency special session, particularly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004 acknowledging the legal opinion of the International Court of Justice on the separation wall being

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constructed by Israel on occupied Palestinian territories. The Court further required that Israel comply with its legal obligations. The resolution also requested the Secretary-General to establish a record of the damages caused by that wall. While we support the establishment of that record, we appeal to the Secretary-General to expedite the process in view of the suffering of the Palestinian people and of the harm they have suffered because of the wall.

The phenomenon of international terrorism has become a source of concern for all. We should work together to eliminate this dangerous phenomenon, and we must deal with its root causes. We agree with the statement made in paragraph 77 of the report that the struggle against terrorism must not take place at the expense of the fundamental freedoms and the human dignity of individuals. We should not therefore deny those rights to peoples under the yoke of foreign occupation that aspire to liberation and independence. We should not confuse the exercise of those rights, which are enshrined in the Charter, with terrorism, which we all condemn.

In that regard, we call again on the United Nations to convene an international conference to arrive at a clear definition of terrorism. We must distinguish between terrorism and the legitimate right of peoples to self-determination in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

The spread of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, is a source of extreme concern to us, and we share the international community's concern at the possibility that such weapons might fall into the hands of terrorists, thereby exacerbating threats to international peace and security.

Syria has been at the forefront of those countries calling for the declaration of the Middle East as a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. We have been working with determination towards that objective. We have acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); we have concluded a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency; and we have contributed to numerous initiatives aimed at realizing this objective, the latest of which was a draft resolution introduced by Syria on behalf of the Arab Group on 29 December 2003, to free the Middle East of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, under collective international supervision and under the auspices of the United Nations, so as to promote multilateral international agreements in the field of disarmament.

As stated in paragraph 116 of the report, the eight Millennium Development Goals continue to provide a unifying framework for the activities of the United Nations in the area of cooperation for development. In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders stressed the importance of creating an environment conducive to development and to the eradication of poverty at both the national and international levels. Development is a human right that should be provided to all — not a benefit to some at the expense of others no matter how immense the disparity between the two. It should have a high priority on our agenda, and the process should not be exploited in order to achieve political gains.

We believe that collective efforts to address development issues and to combat poverty and hunger in the developing world in general and in Africa in particular will greatly contribute to addressing the root causes of the crises facing today's world.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to stress the importance of multilateralism in the Organization's efforts to lay the groundwork for tackling all the challenges and security threats facing us. We look forward to the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change established by the Secretary-General, and we will actively participate in all discussions on the recommendations made by the Panel so we can achieve the common goals that the entire world looks forward to.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to convey our sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization, which makes clear the ever-increasing number and scope of the functions of the Organization. The report reflects the realities on the ground with respect to the various challenges and opportunities facing the international community. It once again stresses that it is only through collective action and a multilateral approach that the United Nations can realize the lofty objectives enshrined in its Charter.

In the meantime, we also look forward to reviewing the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. My delegation believes that the Panel was entrusted with a solemn responsibility, and, accordingly, expects that its

recommendations will identify and encompass the objective realities of the threats and challenges confronting the global community today.

The Islamic Republic of Iran shares the Secretary-General's view that the concepts of the rule of law and multilateralism form the only rational basis for a civilized discourse among nations. There is no doubt that those concepts were a profound source of inspiration for the architects of the Charter and constitute the driving force behind the maintenance of international peace and security through multilateral and proactive cooperation among all equal and sovereign nations.

In an era of globalization and at a time when national, regional and global peace and stability are so interlinked and interdependent, it is essential that the supremacy of the law supersede political exigency. Indeed, multilateral approaches compatible with the globalized nature of the current international arena could be pursued within the framework of a civilized dialogue among nations and in tandem with the sustained promotion of international law.

Any circumventive action based on the logic of "might makes right" and characterized by the unilateral and lawless use of force would jeopardize the fundamental pillars of the Organization. Against that background, we fully endorse the remarks made by the Secretary-General in his opening address to this body:

> "At the international level, all States — strong and weak, big and small — need a framework of fair rules, which each can be confident that others will obey." (*A/59/PV.3, p. 3*)

I need hardly reiterate that the selective application or arbitrary enforcement of the law is detrimental to the realization of that objective.

In that context, and as noted by the Secretary-General, international peace and stability can be built only on a solid foundation of interdependence, which is central for realizing the rule of law and multilateralism. It also needs to be underlined that the principle of shared responsibility lies at the heart of the Millennium Declaration. That concept represents a fundamental value universally recognized by that Declaration, by which the responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development as well as threats to international peace and security should be shared among all nations.

The Secretary-General's perspective on the issue of peace and security must be considered thoroughly. In that respect, my delegation has noted the reference made in the report to the situation in Iraq, including the importance of the presence of the United Nations in that country and the overall security environment, which has so far prevented a larger United Nations presence in Iraq. While concurring with the Secretary-General that a higher level of security is needed in order for the United Nations to have a larger presence in Iraq, we are of the view that the United Nations should more actively engage in a process aimed at empowering the Iraqi people to determine their own destiny.

As a neighbouring country of Iraq that highly values the emergence of that country as a stable, free and democratic State, Iran believes that an independent and prosperous Iraq, with a Government representing all classes in society and holding free and fair elections as scheduled, are essential steps towards the realization of Iraq's full sovereignty and towards its stability.

As noted by the Secretary-General, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, and especially the humanitarian living conditions of Palestinians, continues to deteriorate. He rightly asserted a few days ago that recent measures have led to the deaths of scores of Palestinians, among them civilians, including children. It is alarming and very unfortunate that the Security Council has yet to reach an agreement on the way to prevent the persistence of the crimes that continue to be committed against Palestinians.

On the situation in Afghanistan, we believe that the recent massive popular participation of the Afghan people in the voter registration exercise is a clear sign that the Afghan nation is able and willing to determine its own destiny. Holding fair and free presidential and legislative elections and establishing a broad-based, representative and multi-ethnic Government are vital steps towards the democratization and reconstruction of the country. Nevertheless, we agree with the Secretary-General that a major obstacle to the success of the Bonn process is the increased cultivation of narcotics, which fuels both factional fighting and terrorism. Indeed, the problem of drugs cultivation and trafficking have put political, economic and social development and regional stability in danger.

In the field of disarmament, we share the views so eloquently advanced by the Secretary-General that

weapons of mass destruction remain of paramount importance to international peace and security. Nevertheless, it is our considered view that the continued existence of thousands of nuclear warheads in the stockpiles of nuclear-weapon States and the new plans of one of these States to produce usable mini-nuclear weapons — together with its doctrine of unilateral or pre-emptive use of force, including lowering the threshold for the use of mini-nuclear weapons — all serve to increase the legitimate concerns of the international community.

We strongly believe that the total elimination of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is the only absolute guarantee against the possible use or threat of use of those weapons. The continued existence and development of nuclear weapons will only increase the possibility of unauthorized access by non-State actors to those inhuman weapons. Although Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) is considered a preventive measure against that threat, it lacks due attention to the universality of existing multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation treaties and instruments as the highest priority of the international community.

Equally important is the issue of international terrorism, which — in the words of the Secretary-General — casts its shadow over all the peoples of the world. The United Nations must therefore be engaged in the struggle against terrorism. Effective measures to counter international terrorism also require broad international cooperation. We fully share the view of the Secretary-General that "As we join forces against terrorism, it is imperative that freedom, human rights and the rule of law be upheld and protected". (*A/59/1, para. 9*)

However, an objective review of recent developments in the international arena confirm the fact that violence and terrorism on the part of non-State actors, on the one hand, and unrestrained militarism on the part of certain States, on the other, are two faces of extremism that are mutually reinforcing, and which are fatally contributing to the escalation of global insecurity and lawlessness. Accordingly, the international community must work together to find a way out of that vicious cycle. To achieve that goal, unambiguous unity of purpose is essential.

International cooperation for development is a major issue on the agenda of the United Nations. Considerable efforts have been made towards the realization of the Development Goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. Nonetheless, much remains to be done. Large parts of the world suffer from poverty, hunger and the lack of proper education and health services. Many factors, including good governance and respect for the rule of law and human rights, contribute to economic and social development. However, we cannot, and should not, undermine the critical role that science and technology play in promoting economic and social development in many developing countries.

It would therefore be appropriate to strengthen the role of the Organization in transferring knowledge and technology in all fields to those countries. A serious obstacle to development is the proliferation and application of economic, commercial and financial embargoes, as well as the imposition of extraterritorial measures and sanctions against developing countries. Those actions are not only in contravention of the basic principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, but also adversely affect the economic and social development of targeted States. The time is right for the Organization to consider how to address the situation and establish an international environment for meaningful cooperation for development.

We believe the issue of the HIV/AIDS pandemic to be a serious health threat that has a negative impact on development, and should therefore be given the highest priority by the international community. However, the magnitude of the threat, which truly needs a global response, should not divert attention from the role and responsibility of the United Nations in other areas of development.

Along the same lines, it is rather discouraging that the report of the Secretary-General has not addressed the very important issue of globalization, despite the current debates taking place at the regional and global levels. It also appears that macroeconomic policy issues have fallen into oblivion. Instead, we have noted a commentary in the report of the Commission on the Private Sector and Development, the content of which should not overshadow other critical aspects of the work of the Organization in the area of development.

With regard to sustainable development, we support the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development in following up the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of

Implementation. The twelfth session of the Commission, which was the first substantive meeting of the Commission after the holding of the Johannesburg Summit, conveyed a strong and courageous message about the need to further strengthen the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In that regard, we share the views of the Secretary-General with regard to the need for the United Nations to enhance inter-agency coordination and strengthen the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, with a view to supporting capacity-building activities at the country level.

We take note of the Secretary-General's establishment of the Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation. It is our hope that by raising awareness and mobilizing resources, the Advisory Board's recommendations can strengthen the implementation of intergovernmental agreements contained in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In our view, the Board should focus on finding practical ways to improve implementation, rather than engage in the policy debate on water and sanitation, which is indeed the task of the Commission at its next session.

Humanitarian assistance and humanitarian response, particularly in cases of urgency and natural disaster, remain a priority for the United Nations. According to the Secretary General's report,

> "In 2003 some 700 disasters resulted in 75,000 deaths and economic losses of more than $65 billion. The death toll was many times higher than that for the previous year, largely because of the earthquake in Bam, Islamic Republic of Iran." (*ibid., para. 109*)

I am referring to the tragedy of the earthquake in Bam not only to emphasize the importance of an issue of a purely humanitarian nature, but also to wholeheartedly express our appreciation for the humanitarian assistance offered by all States to the earthquake survivors. We are also thankful to the various United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for their timely and tireless efforts in coordinating and providing humanitarian assistance. In fact, the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran took a leading role, to the best of their ability, in assisting the victims of that catastrophic earthquake.

Next year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, which coincides with the review of the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. The review can provide an avenue for fresh thinking about today's opportunities and challenges. The international community will be in a position to further advance this paradigm to promote peace, democracy and development.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Secretary-General has rightly noted in his report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1) that the United Nations has been through an extraordinarily challenging year. We have all seen and participated in heated discussions about what the role of the Organization should be today. It is well known that truth is born in debate, and the truth is that the United Nations is still the most universal tool for regulating international relations in conditions of globalization; there is no alternative to it. The work of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly shows convincingly that, when the United Nations lives up to its potential, we can have real hope that current problems in the areas of security and cooperation among States will be resolved.

The unprecedented wave of terrorism sweeping over the world has shown how irreplaceable the United Nations is in coordinating the fight against terrorism. Today, Russia, together with other countries, is working towards the adoption of a new Security Council resolution to combat terrorism. Building on the relevant prior Security Council decisions, the draft resolution lays out a clear strategy of collective action for the international community to combat terrorism.

The Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee is the main coordinating body in this area. As its current Chairman, Russia will continue actively to contribute to strengthening its capacity and to increasing its cooperation with international and regional organizations including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. We can conquer terrorism only if we act together, based firmly on the United Nations Charter and the norms of international law. Arbitrary action gives rise to further violence in response. This is why we cannot but agree with the Secretary-General that we

must work in every possible way to strengthen the rule of law.

We must provide guarantees to prevent access by terrorists to weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). This is one of the most serious challenges to security for all members of the international community. Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) sets out the basis and mechanisms of a coordinated response to the black market in WMDs, and is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of non-proliferation regimes. We have a common interest in achieving real progress in this area.

A convincing indicator of the growing need for the presence of the United Nations is the increase in the Organization's peacekeeping operations, especially in Africa. The past year has been marked by significant success in settling conflicts, notably in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Haiti and a number of other hotspots. We hope that the time is near for comprehensive settlements in Sudan, Afghanistan, Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire. Yet many other regional conflagrations remain to be extinguished. Iraq and the Middle East are just two of the items on that list.

We can achieve our goal only by working together under the aegis of the United Nations and by intensifying the Organization's interaction with regional partners pursuant to Chapter VIII of the Charter.

At our initiative, at the two previous sessions of the General Assembly, important resolutions were adopted by consensus on developing a global strategy to respond to threats and challenges, with the United Nations playing a central role (resolutions 57/145 and 58/16). Realization of this initiative will bring to fruition the ideal of collective security, as enshrined in the Charter. We hope that work in this area will continue during the current session of the General Assembly.

It is important that the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change should continue in this spirit. We hope that its recommendations will enable us to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations and other multilateral institutions. The Panel is expected to contribute to reform of the United Nations and its Security Council. The process should culminate in the broadest possible agreement among Member States, in the common interest of strengthening the United Nations.

As the world becomes increasingly interdependent, the United Nations should pay particular attention to combating poverty and illiteracy, especially since these create a breeding ground for terrorism and extremism. We must guarantee equitable development and combat the spread of serious diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

The Russian Government is aware of Russia's responsibility for the future of the planet and has decided to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. We hope that this issue will soon be resolved positively in the State Duma of the Russian Federation.

United Nations activities in the socio-economic area should be focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals and on implementing the agreements made at high-level United Nations conferences and meetings. We must give the United Nations effective capacities to mobilize, with a view to developing and implementing strategies in the area of international trade, finance and investment.

Preparations are under way for the upcoming sixtieth anniversary celebrations and the summit on the five-year review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration; these will enable us to work harder to achieve the lofty goals and ideals of the Organization. Russia is ready to continue working closely with all its partners to complete that massive but noble task.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): Let me begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1). The report is an annual assessment of developments and of the progress made by the United Nations in all areas of endeavour — as well as the lack thereof and the obstacles faced by the Organization in implementing its mandates.

As the United Nations approaches its sixtieth anniversary, it is a timely occasion to look back, to take stock of its accomplishments and to make the necessary adjustments in order to forge ahead. The year 2005 has, as we know, been earmarked for the review of the Millennium Development Goals and for the convening of important debates on United Nations reform, based on the report and recommendations that the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will provide to the Secretary-General in December of this year. Therefore, we should focus our attention even more sharply on this year's report on the

work of the Organization in preparation for the watershed events of next year.

A recurrent theme emanating of the report is the growing demand placed upon the United Nations to cope with the world's problems, with restricted human and financial resources. This is a reality that is constantly echoed by the Department of Public Information, which has done a wonderful job in publicizing the fact. If one were to search on the web page of the United Nations News Service for in-house articles published since the opening of the current session relating to the problem of funding at the United Nations, one would find almost 20 articles that tell of the shortfalls that have obstructed the United Nations agencies' efforts in the areas of opening access to universal reproductive health care, combating HIV/AIDS, dealing with swarming locusts in north-west Africa, fighting a malaria epidemic in Ethiopia, fighting world poverty and hunger, moving the peace process forward in Liberia, carrying out ceasefire monitoring activities in Darfur and helping Haiti recover from natural disaster, to name just a few of the most prominent news stories.

As arbiter of world peace and security, guarantor of human rights and dignity and promoter of development and economic and social well-being for the poor and the needy, the United Nations has been incessantly called upon to solve the world's most pressing problems. However, the means provided to the Organization are not commensurate with the magnitude and complexity of the tasks assigned to it.

The report notes the surge in demand for United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building activities, which currently involve 16 operations around the world and more than 56,000 peacekeepers, and links the success of new operations to continued political, financial and human resources support from Member States. According to statistics cited by the Secretary-General, over the entire course of its nearly six-decade history, the United Nations has spent just over $30 billion on peacekeeping — a mere thirtieth of global military expenditures last year alone. Considering what the United Nations has accomplished in this area, it is clear that the world has been reaping a peace dividend from investing in peacekeeping. This investment is a relatively small sum compared to the amount that the world is spending on defence each year. The figure also suggests the world's capacity to pay. It is thus incumbent upon Member States to help ensure that the United Nations is able to fully implement its peace and security mandates by paying their peacekeeping assessments in full and on time.

Thailand welcomes and supports the continued intensification of the partnership between the United Nations and regional organizations in pursuit of the shared goals of peace, stability and development in a framework of democratic governance and respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law, as stated in the report. The involvement of the Economic Community of West African States in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, of the Organization of American States in Haiti and of the African Union (AU) in Darfur are good examples of burden-sharing and of relegating responsibility to organizations that possess a deeper understanding of the regional dimensions and implications of security problems.

In Thailand's immediate region, the Association of South-East Asian Nations is in the process of establishing a region-wide security community by the year 2020. The question that States Members of the United Nations should explore is how we can help regional organizations sustain adequate logistic, financial and human capabilities on their own. As the Nigerian President told the Security Council with respect to the AU's presence in Darfur,

> "We should avoid a situation where African Union troops on the ground are handicapped owing to a lack of requisite financial resources and logistics support." (*S/PV.5043, p. 5*)

Humanitarian assistance is another area in which funding falls far below the mark. The report states that both new and protracted conflicts, as well as natural disasters, continue to take a toll on the world's poor, often undermining whatever progress has been achieved or creating new emergencies. Haiti is a case in point, where an environmental catastrophe has made it much more difficult for the country to restore its devastated economy, not to mention its political system and the rule of law. In the report, the Secretary-General voices his concern that the consequences of natural hazards pose a great challenge to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The implementation of disaster-reduction activities will hopefully help to lower the risk posed by natural calamity. However, humanitarian crises, such as food insecurity, displaced populations and human rights abuse, especially against women and children, are

happening in the four corners of the world and require an urgent and coordinated response from relief agencies and, most of all, funding from the international community.

However, money is not the solution to the world's ills. Money can be pumped into a country to help alleviate its economic hardship, but it will not enable that country to survive and thrive on its own. To ensure that a country reaches the eight MDGs and sustainable development, partnership for development may well be the best long-term solution. Thailand agrees that there is a need to expand trade, increase official development assistance, relieve foreign debt and reform the international financial system. Thailand also supports the initiative launched by Brazil, France, Chile and Spain to explore new sources of funding to fight poverty and hunger.

The ability of the United Nations to respond to threats and challenges effectively depends on the resources and manpower available to it, which, in turn, depend on the contributions and commitment of Member States. The report also mentions how regular budget contributions have also fallen behind, severely curtailing the level of cash available. This is a chronic problem faced by the United Nations because of delays in payment and the accumulating arrears of Member States. Failure to pay in full and on time will also adversely impact the work of the International Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, as the report warns.

A major challenge to the United Nations in this regard is how to ensure the political will of each and every Member State and how to instil a sense of global responsibility. Political will and commitment of States do not come from the leadership of policy-makers alone. To gain support for the United Nations, public awareness must be galvanized as well. People should understand the role and contribution of the United Nations as well as the gravity of the issues that the United Nations tries to address, so that public support for the work of the Organization can be generated.

The report concludes with a chapter on partnerships, in which the Secretary-General discusses the reorganization of the Department of Public Information and the need to encourage public dialogue on many important issues. Campaigns to increase awareness of the danger of HIV/AIDS, particularly in donor countries, have led to broad support in recent years in terms of resources, actions and partnerships among all actors. It is heartening to learn that the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) now functions as a clearinghouse for partnership information and a facilitator of funding opportunities for the United Nations, especially through the advice that it has been giving to external entities on how they can assist in the achievement of the MDGs.

Thailand encourages wider partnerships between the United Nations and civil society, corporations and other stakeholders, since such alliances will help the Organization cope more effectively with the present-day challenges of the globalized world.

Ms. Holguín-Cuellar (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for the preparation and presentation of his report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1). The report informs us, as it does every year, of the important work that the United Nations is doing to achieve world peace and security and to promote the economic and social development of peoples, respect for human rights and the fulfilment of humanitarian commitments.

Colombia recognizes and commends that work. President Uribe also did so last week, during his address to the General Assembly (see A/59/PV.15), when he described the progress made by the Colombian Government in the social arena and thanked the 21 United Nations agencies that work in my country for their support. All these United Nations institutions, including the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Colombia, work in complete independence, with the full support and backing of the Government and in close cooperation with State and civil society institutions.

As the international community knows, the current and recent Governments of Colombia have always been open to engaging in dialogue with illegal armed groups. When President Uribe was inaugurated in August 2002, he reiterated his availability for dialogue on the basis of a ceasefire and an end to hostilities on the part of the illegal armed groups. He has also requested the continuation of the good offices that the Secretary-General has maintained since 1999 through his Special Adviser on Colombia.

The national Government remains open to the possibility of dialogue with all illegal armed groups that cease hostilities and show a clear willingness for

peace. In that context, we have initiated a process with self-defence groups that should result in the total demobilization of their members by the end of 2005, as established in the Santa Fe de Ralito Agreement of 15 July 2003. That process — which is moving forward under the supervision of the Organization of American States, and in which some European countries have shown interest in participating — deserves full support so that it can achieve the disarmament, demobilization and reinsertion of thousands of members of that illegal armed group.

The Government of Colombia has undertaken significant peace efforts with other illegal armed groups. A broad and flexible proposal was recently sent to the National Liberation Army through the Government of Mexico, which has been working on a facilitation effort. Likewise, the Colombian Government appreciates the good offices employed by the United Nations aimed at a rapprochement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) with regard to a humanitarian agreement. A proposal aimed at liberating kidnapped persons has been sent through the Swiss Government to that illegal armed group.

All those efforts are well known in national public opinion and in the international community. But, as the people and the Government of Colombia have remained open to those who show a willingness to enter into a serious negotiation process, we remain steadfast in our fight against terrorism and violence, which each year cause tens of thousands of deaths and consume 5.8 per cent of the country's gross domestic product.

To deal with those scourges, we have been implementing a democratic security policy, which is already producing impressive results, such as a police presence in all the country's municipalities and declines of 22 per cent in homicides, 35 per cent in massacres and 34.7 per cent in kidnappings. That policy — which also covers the fight against the production and trafficking of illicit drugs — has also enabled us, for the first time, to reverse the growth trend of illegal crops, whose cultivation has declined by 30 per cent annually since 2002. The most recent report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime recorded that significant success.

I make these observations to clarify the fact that what paragraph 31 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/1) describes as "an intensive military campaign against the two major guerrilla groups" is actually the most successful security policy Colombia has ever implemented — a policy that is restoring the rule of law throughout the national territory, has reduced violence and terrorism with strict respect for human rights and has reduced the rate of internal displacement by 40 per cent. It is a policy aimed at protecting the Colombian civilian population, which for decades has suffered from terrorism perpetrated by illegal groups.

The democratic security policy is not opposed to a negotiated settlement; that is one of its goals and is even becoming its basis. A lasting peace requires dialogue and effective institutions. The Constitution and the law are the best guarantees that we will go down that road with transparency and seriousness. The consolidation of a firm and transparent authority depends on a similarly firm approach towards all illegal armed groups, without any distinction. During this administration, the fight against self-defence groups has been the strongest and most impressive in the country's recent history. Among members of these groups, the number of those killed has increased by 210 per cent, with the number of those captured rising 280 per cent.

Since its beginning, this Government has worked to demobilize members of guerrilla and self-defence groups. Today 6,000 people, both men and women, have deserted the ranks of such groups. The Government is carrying out a programme to help those people return to civilian life. Fifty-seven per cent are members of FARC, 22 per cent are members of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia, 17 per cent are members of the National Liberation Army and 4 per cent belong to other dissident groups. This programme — vital for our peace and national reconciliation efforts — represents an enormous financial and logistical effort for a country like Colombia. That is why we require the support and cooperation of the international community and of the United Nations to provide these thousands of Colombians with an alternative to a life of violence.

The Colombian Government appreciates the assistance and cooperation of the international community with regard to our peace and national reconciliation efforts. The support provided by the Organization of American States (OAS) in the area of verifying and supplementing the efforts aimed at

dialogue in my country has been invaluable. Likewise, we welcome all cooperation and support initiatives from international bodies and friendly countries, which, at the request of the Colombian Government, may enable us to reach a definitive and lasting peace.

We appreciate and thank the Secretary-General for the actions he has taken in using his good offices, which have been requested by the Colombian Government. Moreover, we consider it appropriate to jointly assess the relevance and effectiveness of the contacts that the Special Envoy has made with the illegal armed groups.

Finally, with regard to the draft legislation on justice and reparation, we should note that it would be applied not only to the self-defence groups that have begun peace dialogues with the Government, but to all illegal armed groups that decide to lay down their weapons and enter into a serious negotiation process. For the Colombian Government, it is clear that those responsible for atrocities or crimes against humanity — whether they be members of guerrilla or self-defence groups — cannot benefit from pardons or amnesties. Such cases require additional legal instruments that recognize the principles governing the fight against impunity: truth, justice and reparation. To that end, the Government has elaborated the draft legislation on justice and reparation, which, after having been considered in the Senate and discussed at public hearings, is now being considered in the House of Representatives. The objective is to obtain a legal instrument, based on the broadest possible national consensus, which will enable us to try persons who have participated in peace processes but are responsible for atrocities.

The people and the Government of Colombia are aware of the humanitarian and human rights situation created by violence and the rise of terrorism in our country. That is why, more than discussing the total numbers of internally displaced persons — which are impossible to calculate exactly and which trivialize a human tragedy — we are committed to giving such persons sufficient and timely attention. The current Government has multiplied by eight times the financial resources allocated to assist that highly vulnerable population. The investment budget of the social solidarity network — an entity whose mandate is to assist such persons — has grown from $14 million in 2002 to $120 million for 2005. More than 70,000 internally displaced persons have returned, and we are working hard to consolidate peace in the regions and thus to ensure more massive returns.

However, as the situation requires coordination and cooperation with the United Nations system on the part of all parties that work in the humanitarian area — including regional and local Governments, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and donor countries — in Colombia we have begun to negotiate on a second humanitarian assistance plan that will require the firm commitment, not only of the Government of Colombia, but of all the parties involved and of the United Nations system, as well as international cooperation.

I should like to conclude by mentioning another humanitarian tragedy that Colombia is experiencing as a result of illegal armed groups. I am referring to the antipersonnel mines that they have planted throughout the country, which kill and maim mostly Colombian soldiers and police, but also defenceless civilians — particularly children — and prevent development in vast areas of the Colombian countryside. We are grateful for the international cooperation provided to us by non-governmental organizations and international organizations such as the OAS and the United Nations in the dangerous work of demining various countries. We reaffirm the importance of continuing and increasing the assistance and international cooperation in that regard.

Mr. Paolillo (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): This year's report of the Secretary-General (A/59/1) once again reveals, as in previous years, the profound imbalance that affects cooperative efforts to try to resolve, through the United Nations, the great problems faced by humanity. It is an imbalance between the Organization's ambitious objectives and its limited means to attain them.

For example, in the area of peacekeeping and peace-building, the demand for the human and financial resources needed to ensure the success of old and new peacekeeping operations has increased considerably, but what is offered to satisfy that demand continues to be insufficient and slow. Recently, the Security Council approved an increase in troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Uruguay has deployed a contingent of 2,000 officials and soldiers for a number of years. But the authorized increase was less than half of what the Secretary-General considered necessary. Troops for the new operations in Liberia,

Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi and Haiti have not always been deployed in the numbers required or with the necessary speed.

The report of the Secretary-General identifies numerous sectors of international cooperation in which there are disturbing signs of violations, non-compliance and lack of commitment by States with respect to international agreements. Those include the sectors of disarmament, non-proliferation, the ban on nuclear testing, the ban on anti-personnel landmines, the Statute of the International Criminal Court and biological diversity. We find similar shortcomings in the areas of social, economic and political cooperation. We can recall various instances of shortfalls in financial contributions for humanitarian and development objectives.

The Secretary-General notes that progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven and that so far, four years after the Millennium Declaration, there have been few positive results. However, he also notes that some time-bound and measurable goals are still achievable by the deadline of 2015, but that will be possible only if developed and developing countries fulfil their commitments and properly implement agreed social and economic policies and mobilize promised financial resources.

The principal message of the report of the Secretary-General is that it is time that words gave way to action. We know what we want. We know what we have to do to achieve it, and we know how to do it. Thus, all that remains to do now is act. We must act immediately and make what we have been promising in recent years become a reality. To do that, we do not need new summits, new declarations or new resolutions, and we do not need to create new rules or reform existing institutions.

The Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus, like two sides of the same coin, clearly establish the responsibilities of both the developed and the developing countries. The developed countries have the responsibility for achieving the first seven of the Millennium Development Goals, while the developing countries must achieve the goal of creating a world partnership for development, based on genuine solidarity, leading to a genuine readiness to put in place mechanisms for fulfilling the commitments made in the three key components of trade, official development assistance and foreign debt.

With respect to international trade and development, we view as positive the agreement reached in Geneva on 1 August to relaunch the Doha round of negotiations and strengthen the multilateral trade system and the World Trade Organization.

While official development assistance has grown since the Millennium Summit and while a group of countries — Belgium, France, Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom — have announced that they will increase their contributions, we are still far from achieving the $100 billion that experts have estimated as necessary for fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals on schedule. Efforts on external debt, debt relief and the use of the resources that have been freed up to achieve the Millennium Development Goals have started to yield results. We should therefore continue in that direction and broaden the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative.

We attach great importance to next year's high-level meeting of the General Assembly to follow up the commitments made in the Monterrey Consensus and the Economic and Social Council meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. We hope that the outcome will make a useful contribution to the high-level meeting to review progress on achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

In the three paragraphs the report devotes to terrorism, the Secretary-General inform us of the strengthening of the Counter-Terrorism Committee and of the assistance activities of the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. We would have liked to receive updated information on the coordination of the counter-terrorism activities performed by the many components of the United Nations system active in that area.

We reaffirm our belief that the international community still lacks a concrete counter-terrorism strategy that is broad, coordinated and effective in order to fight international terrorism. That is undoubtedly a serious gap in the system of overall international cooperation, not only because that gap limits our potential to fight terrorism effectively but also because, in the absence of an internationally agreed strategy, the individual responses of States to defend themselves from that scourge could be

misaimed and could have an effect contrary to what was intended.

I believe we must devote ourselves without delay to formulating a counter-terrorism strategy at the international, regional and bilateral levels, aimed not only at preventing, eliminating and punishing all terrorist activities but also at identifying the causes that give rise to terrorism. Such a strategy should include, among other things, the operational coordination of national security, information, police and immigration services and the establishment of common procedures for extradition.

With respect to chapter VI of the report, on management, I shall briefly comment on the strengthening of the Organization. Paragraph 256 notes that further efforts to consolidate the network of information centres in the regions will proceed in the coming year. We recall that the General Assembly has given no mandate in that regard and that originally the idea was to save money in the developed countries by using advanced communication technologies and to apply those savings to enhancing the programmes of the information centres in developing countries. It is our understanding that the will of the General Assembly must be heeded and that the Secretariat should submit a constructive, comprehensive proposal for enhancing the functioning of the information centres in all developing countries.

Mr. Moleko (Lesotho): I extend to you, Sir, our congratulations on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. My delegation pledges its support to you to ensure that you succeed in your important work. In the same breath, let me thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1).

The world has degenerated into a more dangerous place for us, its inhabitants. The violence that we have witnessed, directed at the most vulnerable members of our society — women and children — is of great concern to my delegation. We have seen acts of terrorism directed at children in the name of a national cause in Beslan, the Russian Federation. We have seen images of hapless women and children in Darfur, Palestine and other places where they are driven to destitution. These and other acts of violence undermine the efforts of our Organization in the promotion of peace and security. The United Nations should be commended for its efforts in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace-building and peacekeeping. The efforts of our Organization in denying terrorists access to weapons of mass destruction are commendable.

We need to work together, as the international community, to halt the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, because they are instruments that destabilize most countries. We have all seen the unfortunate results of unilateralism. The fruits of multilateralism, on the other hand, can be seen in Afghanistan, where elections will be held soon.

There is a need to consolidate peace in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone. That is a goal that we can achieve if we focus on it. We are confident that the continued leadership of the Secretary-General will lead to peace and political stability in those sister countries.

We are seeing an increase in violence directed at women through rape. Such gender-based violence is a terrible scar on our world. We welcome the guidelines from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees entitled *Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Guidelines for Prevention and Response*.

We also welcome the emerging cooperation in the United Nations family to support children separated from their families by war and conflict. The inter-agency guiding principles on unaccompanied and separated children, issued in February 2004; are very welcome. It is our hope that they will help lead to a halt in the recruitment of child solders and the better protection of the most vulnerable members of our society, children.

I cannot conclude my remarks without making reference to the threat posed by HIV/AIDS to the very survival of many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. We welcome the efforts by the international community in fighting that pandemic. The leadership of the Secretary-General, through his Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, Stephen Lewis, is beginning to bear fruit. However, we should observe that the enormity of the problem requires more resources that are currently available. Sub-Saharan Africa cannot achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals without arresting the spread of that pandemic.

Finally, my delegation would like to thank your predecessor, Sir, Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the

General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, for his efforts in the revitalization of the Assembly. The goal of reforming the Security Council, however, remains elusive. Yet such reform is a sine qua non for ensuring its capacity in the maintenance of international peace and security. The composition of that body must reflect the complexion of the membership of the Organization. The working methods of the Council need to be modified. The Security Council must be representative, as well as democratic, if it is to effectively discharge its duties.

Mr. Sen (India): We welcome this opportunity to participate in the debate, under agenda item 10, on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1). We thank the Secretary-General for the report and for the statement he made at the commencement of the general debate introducing the report. The theme of the statement, the rule of law at both the national and the international levels, was very welcome and timely. In the context of a longer historical time-span, we may ask whether the United Nations has performed better than during the cold war. In matters of peace and security, the results are equally — if not more — problematic. In economic matters, there has been clearly a marked decline from a period when ideas such as the General Scheme of Preferences, the Integrated Programme for Commodities, the Special Drawing Rights, supplementary financing and debt forgiveness were first advanced and agreed upon in the United Nations and then followed up by specialized agencies. Those strengthened peace and security in spite of the cold war. However, it would be unfair to put all the blame on the United Nations — for the United Nations is only as strong as its Members.

The Secretary-General's description of the year under review as extraordinarily challenging is very apt. The period — beginning with the commencement of military action in Iraq and, in its aftermath, the surge in peacekeeping operations and the threat of international terrorism and its linkages with weapons of mass destruction — has been both challenging and taxing for the United Nations system. At the same time, the increased responsibilities in dealing with transnational issues relating to international crime, poverty, hunger, malnutrition, infectious diseases and epidemics, environmental degradation, human rights violations and humanitarian emergencies, have called upon resources and reserves that the international community has striven hard to find.

The new and onerous demands being made on the United Nations system are but manifestations of the post-cold-war twenty-first century, where intra-State conflicts outnumber inter-State conflicts, where failed States place a heavy burden on their neighbours and on the international community and where interpretations of the rule of law are consistently stretched. In the circumstances, we agree with the Secretary-General that the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change should be bold and practicable.

The year 2005 will be crucial in addressing the new challenges with which the United Nations is confronted. The coinciding of the recommendations of the High-level Panel, the Millennium+5 event and the sixtieth year of the establishment of the Organization should provide sufficient impetus for the international community, in particular the Member States, to endow the United Nations with the strength, resources and direction required to enable it to boldly and effectively face the future.

We agree with the Secretary-General's view that United Nations reform will not be complete without Security Council reform, bringing it into line with today's realities. We hope that the High-level Panel will take note of and comprehensively address the issue of Security Council restructuring. There is a widespread view, particularly within the developing world, that the imbalance in the current composition of the Security Council is making the Council's decisions more difficult for many countries to accept and implement. Therefore, the bold and practicable ideas that could emerge from the High-level Panel to address the many ways and means of increasing the relevance and effectiveness of the United Nations in diverse areas such as counter-terrorism, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, humanitarian crises and the like, would in large measure hinge on the ability of the Panel to comprehensively and satisfactorily address the imbalance in the Council's composition.

In his report, the Secretary-General has recalled that the Charter requires the United Nations to promote conditions for economic and social progress and development, as well as solutions to international economic, health and related problems. He has drawn

attention to the increasing gap between demand and raised resources required to address natural disasters, refugee situations and other humanitarian emergencies; the fight against HIV/AIDS; and the critical situation in Africa, among other responsibilities devolving on the international community.

While the executive and enforcement roles of the United Nations in areas such as peace and security and, to some extent, in disarmament and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, are paramount, many developing countries — for obvious reasons — view United Nations engagement in the social and economic sectors as seminal. The United Nations is regarded by developing nations as the global conscience-keeper, and as such it must preserve that role and guide the work of specialized agencies in those areas.

The report also draws attention to the role played by the United Nations in conflict prevention and peace-making in various parts of the world, ranging from Iraq and the rest of the Middle East to Cyprus, the Sudan and Asia. The case made by the Secretary-General for the prevention of conflicts through early warning and quiet diplomacy would undoubtedly make unnecessary major politico-military efforts to resolve them later. At the same time, the limitations of imposing preventive and peace-making services on Member States that do not want them must be borne in mind.

The United Nations has had a tradition of directly addressing operational prevention through preventive diplomacy, but it should also consider the enhanced implementation of a structural prevention strategy to address the political, social, cultural, economic, environmental and other structural causes that often underlie the immediate symptoms of armed conflicts. The United Nations system as a whole could begin to consider the mandates of its agencies, funds and programmes through a prevention lens. It could also consider strengthening its capacity to help coordinate international efforts by all actors — including Member States, international financial institutions, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector — to carry out structural prevention strategies.

The surge in peacekeeping brings new challenges, the principal one being that of sustained commitment in terms of both troops and specialized military and civilian support services from countries that have men and financial resources. Regrettably, there continues to be a lag, with almost 80 per cent of the troops deployed in United Nations peacekeeping operations being contributed by developing countries. The issues of effective planning, congruity among mandates, resources allocated and objectives to be achieved, along with the safety and security of peacekeepers, are other areas of particular concern. Those questions should be the subject of constant dialogue and interaction among the troop-contributing countries, the Security Council and the Secretariat if peacekeeping is to be effective.

The surge in peacekeeping has been accompanied by a tendency to lean on regional solutions. Reliance on regional solutions cannot and should not absolve the United Nations of its responsibility and its commitment to be the primary guarantor of the maintenance of international peace and security. While coalitions of the willing may have been authorized by the Security Council for enforcement action, in many other circumstances of complex peacekeeping operations, the broadest range of capabilities available to the international community can be brought to bear only through the United Nations. The challenge is how best to involve regional organizations without regionalizing peacekeeping.

India remains steadfast in its commitment to the ideal of promoting world peace and security; our contribution to United Nations peacekeeping is part of that broader strategy. We have been one of the most consistent contributors of troops to the United Nations and shall continue to uphold that tradition. We shall continue to work with the Secretariat and with Member States in order to make peacekeeping the effective instrument that we all wish it to be.

Even as countries formerly beset by conflict emerge to find peace and development, new areas of the world are faced with humanitarian emergencies of varying proportions. The efforts of the international community need to provide humanitarian solace to those areas that have recently descended into crisis situations, while not forgetting those that no longer have the benefit of the so-called "CNN effect".

We are therefore concerned that humanitarian assistance continues to be unevenly allocated and that its levels remain insufficient. We are concerned that contributions made by July 2004 fulfilled only 32 per cent of the requirements halfway through the Consolidated Appeal period. The section of the report

under the heading "Funding humanitarian emergencies" provides details of the shortfalls faced by more than one agency. Even security needs are fully funded only in the case of Iraq, while many less prominent emergencies have experienced a lack of security personnel, resources and assets. We endorse the Secretary-General's call to the donor community to ensure that funding for humanitarian operations is increased and that it is provided more consistently across humanitarian emergencies to cover the needs of all sectors. We trust, however, that that will not be accomplished at the cost of official such assistance and outlays for such assistance.

It is heartening to note that the refugee population has decreased significantly, falling 20 per cent overall from 2002 to the present. We have noted that in Afghanistan, while more 3.5 million refugees and internally displaced persons have returned to their homes since the end of 2001, an estimated 180,000 internally displaced persons and 2 million refugees remain in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Greater political stability and protection and freedom from the continuing acts of terrorism perpetrated by the resurgent remnants of the Taliban would, we believe, create a more congenial atmosphere for the return of Afghan refugees.

We agree with the Secretary-General that the impartiality and neutrality of the humanitarian response must be maintained in all integrated missions. The humanitarian function should retain its sanctity and respect by remaining apolitical, neutral and impartial. However, we strongly believe that while certain situations may demand an integrated mission, that should be the exception rather than the norm. The association of military personnel with a humanitarian mission would negatively affect the public perception of humanitarian personnel. In a world becoming increasingly suspicious, even of the activities of the humanitarian arm of the United Nations — a situation that poses serious security risks and concerns — it is imperative to maintain the separate character of the humanitarian function to the maximum extent possible. The basic principles for providing humanitarian assistance were well established in resolution 46/182. Wherever the humanitarian function is performed as part of an integrated mission, those guiding principles must be respected.

We recently witnessed the potential of natural disasters to cause widespread havoc and destruction in several Caribbean countries. The economic losses caused by natural disasters are even more difficult to bear when the victims are the poor of the developing world. Natural disasters pose a great challenge to the efforts of developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The developing countries — especially the disaster-prone ones among them — would benefit from assistance in the area of capacity-building in early-warning systems.

India is steadfastly committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and we are steadily working towards that objective. Like other delegations, however, we remain concerned that the pace of achieving the Goals remains uneven and that, at the current pace, many parts of the world would be unable to reach the targets by 2015. We support the need for the fulfilment of Goal 8 by the development partner countries. But official development assistance alone may not be enough, as capacity-building policies and strategies will also be needed in many countries, particularly in Africa.

The Secretary-General rightly observed in paragraph 139 of his report that "increased and more equitable world trade holds forth the prospect of helping nations to achieve the Millennium Development Goals". We share the view that the successful outcome of the Doha Programme of Action will depend largely on the manner in which the interests and concerns of developing countries are taken into account, as well as on their own negotiating skills and struggles in the post-framework-agreement period.

The Secretary-General pointed out in his report that a road map for the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action on transit transport cooperation among land-locked developing countries, transit developing countries and development partners, including donor countries and international financial institutions, has been prepared and validated through a meeting of United Nations entities and agencies, including the World Bank Group. We welcome that development.

In his report, the Secretary-General observed that water and its linkages to health, poverty reduction, gender equality, education, environmental protection and peace are crucial to sustainable development. India recognizes the crucial importance of initiatives in the area of water and sanitation in improving the quality of

the life of the poor, and we have given considerable attention to water and sanitation programmes in our development plans. We share the view that the question of safe drinking water needs greater prominence both globally and locally. The major constraints faced by developing countries in implementing the agreed Goals are the non-availability of financial resources and of necessary technologies. These need to be addressed with a sense of urgency.

We share the view that science and technology are critical elements in our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and that there is a need to address questions of connectivity and access to information and communication technologies and biotechnology, as well as technology transfer and capacity-building.

The Government of India has decided to adhere to the two Optional Protocols to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child — namely, those on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

With regard to the establishment of the rule of law in post-conflict situations, we concur with the view that a "one-size-fits-all" approach should be avoided. The legal and cultural traditions of the local community have to play a key role in devising an approach for the re-establishment of the rule of law. The involvement of local actors and legal professionals, therefore, could provide a more lasting solution than one based on transplanted outside expertise, which may be unsuitable for local conditions. In terms of the United Nations Charter, the General Assembly should debate this, along with many other themes.

The provision of safety and security to United Nations personnel both in Headquarters and in the field has become an urgent task. While we note that some interim measures have been taken in this area, ad hoc approaches bring about an unwarranted sense of complacency and, in the long term, are bound to be counter-productive. We await the report of the Secretary-General called for under resolution 58/295 and hope that it will take a comprehensive and long-term view of this subject and propose a coherent plan of action involving all entities concerned.

We are disappointed to note that there has not been much progress on the Capital Master Plan over the last year. The principal stumbling block continues to be in the area of financing for that project. We need to address this issue with some urgency in this session.

Reform of the planning, programming and budgeting cycle, mandated by the General Assembly during its last session, has resulted in the preparation of a new strategic framework for the Organization to replace the medium-term plan. We do hope that with a shorter time horizon of two years, and with the plan now being coterminous with the budget, it will lead to better planning and delivery of mandated activities and to greater accountability of programme managers.

It is unfortunate that regular budget contributions during the last year fell behind previous years. Some peacekeeping missions are perennially short of funds. At the same time, the United Nations faces an unprecedented surge in new peacekeeping demands. This makes it critical for Member States to make full and timely payment of assessed contributions. Professed commitment to the United Nations by Member States needs to be backed up by living up to the obligations.

We shall provide more detailed comments on the various issues before this session under the respective agenda items.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): Mr. President, at the outset let me congratulate you on your well-deserved election to preside over the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I admire your leadership, as well as your long and illustrious experience in diplomacy. I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation in your efforts to make this session a success.

I would like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his comprehensive report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1).

The United Nations was created to bring countries together to work collectively in order to promote international peace and security, to foster cooperation for development, to protect vulnerable people, and to advance human rights and the rule of law. The present deliberation affords us the opportunity to assess the performance of the United Nations over the last 12 months and help the Organization chart a more robust and defined course in the future.

Clearly, the United Nations has shown a mixed record of achievements during the review period. Some

problems have yielded to resolution and others are moving in the right direction. Meanwhile, many old challenges have persisted and new ones have emerged. For instance, in the area of peace and security, Guatemala and Sierra Leone are limping back to normalcy. Afghanistan, though still dangerous, is moving toward democratic elections. Although the handover of power to the Iraqi people on 30 June 2004 is welcome, Iraq continues to be a major concern to the international community. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is taking innocent lives on both sides and destabilizing the whole region. Those two situations together could cause the entire Middle East to explode and unleash political instability and economic hardships on the whole world.

The United Nations has had to mount peacekeeping operations in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Burundi and Haiti to restore calm and normalcy in those countries during the review period. Sudan appears to be the next candidate for the deployment of such operations. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, is still highly volatile. Nepal has contributed its troops to those operations and looks forward to increased cooperation with the Security Council and the Secretariat in the endeavour of promoting international peace and security.

Terrorism has become a major threat to international peace and security. Al Qaeda and its cells, as well as domestic terror groups, continue to launch vicious attacks on innocent civilians in many countries around the world. The global community has yet to come up with an adequate legal and operational response to stamp out this menace. Nepal itself is in the clutches of conflict and brutality unleashed by the so-called Maoists. His Majesty's Government is committed to finding a political settlement to the problem and to protecting the people's lives and property until such a settlement is found. We appreciate the Secretary-General's offer of good offices to help us find an amicable resolution to the Maoist problem. However, at the moment we are trying to find a solution on our own.

Durable peace will be a mirage without committed efforts at disarmament. Unfortunately, nuclear disarmament has hit a brick wall, fuelling nuclear weapons proliferation around the world. Controls on small arms and light weapons remain woefully inadequate to prevent non-State actors from acquiring and misusing such weapons.

In view of those various challenges, Nepal welcomes the appointment of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. We hope the Panel will be able to come up with pragmatic and realistic recommendations that will help the United Nations and the world community at large to deal effectively with the existing and gathering threats to peace and security.

For the majority of the world's people, poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease remain the most urgent and primary concerns. Those conditions have become a major source of tension and conflict. Thanks to spectacular progress in poverty reduction in countries like China and India, the number of people living in absolute poverty has somewhat receded. However, that is small solace to the majority of countries that have stagnated or declined in their economic growth and development performance. Hunger is taking the lives of women and children. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are decimating countries and generations. Globalization has brought few fruits to developing countries, and sustainable development has yet to take off.

Meeting the Millennium Development Goals will remain a mirage for many developing countries unless the international community does more to help. Although official development assistance has shown an upward trend, it remains far short of the additional $50 billion needed annually to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative has been frustratingly slow in providing relief in order to the candidate countries, and it is woefully limited in its coverage, since it does not include all least developed countries (LDCs) that need debt relief in order to stimulate their economies. Some development partners have relaxed access for products from the least developed countries to their markets, but others have yet to do so. Market access remains a major concern for developing countries and the Doha round is halting and slow in making progress to provide a level playing field to those countries. In addition, foreign direct investment has bypassed the majority of developing countries and most least developed nations.

It is encouraging that the number of refugees has declined over the last few years; but there has been an increase in the number of internally displaced persons.

Many refugee situations have persisted and remain as intractable as ever. Among them is the plight of more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees who have been living for over a decade in camps in eastern Nepal. Despite the best efforts of Nepal to resolve the problem through dialogue, the refugees have not been able to return home, owing to Bhutan's procrastination strategy.

Natural disasters have affected many countries, several of them in the Caribbean region which was devastated by the recent hurricanes. Those countries need greater support from the international community to help them recover and to expedite their reconstruction efforts. Concerted endeavours are also necessary to take mitigating measures to prevent future disasters or to lessen their impact.

There have been unprecedented advances in the pursuit of democracy and human rights around the world. A rich body of international law has evolved over time, as well. But observing the provisions of international law, human rights treaties and democratic governance continues to remain a serious challenge.

Nepal, as a staunch supporter of multilateralism and as a nation wedded to multiparty democracy and constitutional monarchy, is committed to practicing democracy and respecting human rights and the rule of law at home. We also believe the same standards and values should be applied to global governance.

It is evident that the United Nations has been working in all those areas of common interest to humanity. It is a major player in keeping peace and promoting security in the world. Although its resources for development are fairly limited, the United Nations has been playing a catalytic role in that vital realm as well. This Organization is at the forefront of providing humanitarian assistance and advancing human rights and the rule of law.

In Nepal, we indeed appreciate these critical roles the United Nations has been playing to create a better world for all, but the United Nations also has numerous limitations of its own that must be overcome by strengthening its legislative processes and executive structures to promote fairness and equity among Member States, greater accountability among programme managers and increased security for its staff.

For this, the United Nations needs urgent revitalization so that it can grapple with conflicts and development challenges around the globe. Its sister agencies, such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, also require drastic reforms in order to give voice to the weak and small within the community of nations. In all those reforms, we see a vital role for the United Nations itself.

Nepal believes that, working together, we can create a more efficient, effective and equitable United Nations and a better world order, in which all countries can enjoy the benefits of peace, development, human rights and the rule of law.

Mr. de Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): In commenting on the work of the Organization and the report presented to us by the Secretary-General (A/59/1), I would like to begin by expressing the satisfaction of Peru for having been host to the Secretary-General and Mrs. Annan last November. The fond memories that that visit evoked in Peru are still alive today.

In the twenty-first century, the world is becoming a paradoxical reality. On the one hand, it is becoming integrated through productive processes, trade and financial trends and because of the great progress in the areas of digital communications and the Internet. Yet, on the other hand, it is being fragmented because of civil wars, ethnic and religious conflicts, terrorism, social inequality and environmental degradation.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General, these contradictory tendencies of globalization and fragmentation call into question national and international governability. Today as never before, we are seeing how many poor nation-States are becoming ungovernable, collapsing into chaos and civil war. We are seeing how new non-State actors, such as terrorist organizations and drug and arms traffickers, are emerging and achieving global power.

In the sort of fragmented world that we are seeing, no nation, as powerful as it may be, will be able to unilaterally establish a new order. Therefore, at the beginning of a new century, we are looking at a natural vacuum in world power. If we do not quickly fill that vacuum with a multilateral form of governability, then that could lead us to international anarchy.

In light of that situation, with all of its implications, the United Nations today is an indispensable organization whether we like it or not, one without which we will never be able to bring about

a new world order aimed at preventing and pacifying civil, ethnic and religious conflicts; fighting terrorism and global crime; punishing crimes against humanity, including ethnic cleansing and genocide; eradicating poverty and hunger; and protecting the environment.

One of the symptoms of international anarchy that has begun to emerge is the proliferation, after the cold war, of more than 30 civil conflicts that have caused 5 million deaths and almost 17 million refugees. Those conflicts, caused by political, ethnic or religious hatred, are converting many countries into veritable factories for crimes against humanity. In light of that serious situation, the United Nations cannot abdicate its responsibility to protect populations that are not being protected by their own Governments. That is why true reform of the United Nations must now be aimed, above all, at strengthening the legitimate use of force by the Organization in order to prevent massive human rights violations, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Reform of the Security Council must therefore be sufficiently broad to give its decisions greater democratic legitimacy. But it must also be realistic in order to ensure the effective functioning of the Council.

Neither the strengthening of the multilateral system for the legitimate use of force nor improvement in the effectiveness of peacekeeping and nation-building operations will be sufficient to prevent or put an end to civil conflicts or to the collapse of nation-States into ungovernable entities. Neither will multilateral cooperation initiatives against terrorism and international crime be sufficient if we do not establish a new type of multilateral socio-economic governance that will begin to reduce hunger, poverty and inequality among and within nations.

According to the Human Development Report and the World Development Report, between 1975 and 2001 — a quarter of a century — personal income failed to increase more than 3 per cent in more than 100 of the so-called developing countries, preventing billions of people from emerging from poverty. Today, 2.8 billion people live on $2 a day and 1.3 billion subsist on $1 a day. Moreover, during the 1990s, social inequality grew more pronounced throughout the world. According to the Worldwatch Institute, that increase in inequality affected not only personal income but also access to water, food and energy: public wealth essential for civilized life and socio-political stability. Today, the decline in personal income and the increase in social inequality are colliding like two tectonic plates, producing tremors of social disintegration and international anarchy.

It is necessary to reduce poverty, but reducing poverty does not constitute development. We must try to control the damage caused precisely by a lack of development. However, even the modest Millennium Goal of reducing poverty — which is not development — will be far from attained in 2015, as indicated in this year's recent Human Development Report. In fact, at the current pace, we would need nearly 200 years to reduce abject poverty by half in some countries, including many countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa and the Andean region.

In addition to new financial mechanisms and more resources, poverty reduction requires a fairer international trade system in which subsidies for the production and export of agricultural products are eliminated, the food security of poor countries is strengthened and, above all, developing countries receive real and effective differentiated treatment in negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO). In short, the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO must address the social deficit caused by globalization and thus prevent further increases in international instability and violence.

The time has come to address these questions with the utmost seriousness. We hope that, when we meet next year to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, we will be able to arrive at a clear agreement on the means for attaining the main Millennium Development Goals. Although the Goals are modest, at least they will partially free us from poverty.

We must accept the fact that social exclusion is the primary cause of the violence, the instability, the fragility of democracy and the national and international fragmentation that are spreading throughout the world today. All the reports of the world's highly regarded strategic institutions agree that social exclusion creates violence and civil war. That cause cannot be eliminated unless we ensure that globalization becomes a positive force that provides tangible benefits to all nations and all human beings.

In order to make globalization inclusive, we need to reiterate that the current international system transcends inter-State relations, also including non-

governmental organizations and transnational corporations. That is why we in the United Nations must undertake greater efforts to include these new global actors in the implementation of our decisions; otherwise, many resolutions adopted by the Assembly may not actually be enforced because all the actors of today's world do not participate in them.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): I would like to join previous speakers in thanking Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his highly informative report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1). My delegation is satisfied with the thematic overview of the work of the United Nations in all key areas of its activities.

It is very hard to disagree with the Secretary-General that the United Nations has been through an extraordinarily challenging year. In too many areas, we had to resolve a constant conflict between wishes and resources, between the desirable and the achievable. We faced a long list of problems, but we did not always have a clear vision of how to deal with them.

However, what is clear now is that no country can face the current global threats and challenges alone or hide behind a mask of indifference or passivity. The new reality demands a mobilization of efforts by the entire international community to counter those challenges. We hope that the contributions of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change will help us to develop a clearer vision of ways and means for effective collective action by the United Nations.

Despite the past differences over Iraq, this year the United Nations and its Security Council showed unity in addressing the situation in that country. Ukraine welcomes the transition of power to the Iraqis, the formation of the interim representative and executive structures and the clear definition of the role of the United Nations. My country is prepared to assist the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq in carrying out his mission. It is now important to ensure the effective implementation of the timetable for a comprehensive political transition process in the country, especially through the holding of free elections, the drafting of a new constitution and the formation of the transitional government of Iraq.

Ukraine believes that the United Nations should continue to maintain a leading role in promoting global cooperation in the fight against terrorism. We believe the creation of a new efficient system of information-exchange on terrorism would help prevent new attacks and save priceless human lives.

We are pleased to note that the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) has become more proactive in its dialogue with Member States and has improved technical assistance to countries. Ukraine welcomes the Committee's efforts to develop mechanisms for the exchange of information between various international, regional and sub-regional organizations. We also welcome the role played in this area by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and support further strengthening of this structure.

The Secretary-General stressed in his report that the sharp surge in demand for peacekeeping during the past year has posed a serious challenge for the United Nations and could impact the effectiveness of operations. The political commitment of Member States and the contribution of financial and human resources are needed now more than ever, if we want peacekeeping to remain an effective instrument of the United Nations. As one of the major troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping operations and the largest troop-contributing country in Europe, my country is ready to remain a reliable partner of the United Nations in this area.

However, we are deeply concerned about the increasing danger to peacekeeping personnel. It is critically important and urgent that we strengthen the protection of people in the service of the United Nations. In this regard, we welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1502 (2003) on the security of United Nations personnel. As one of the initiators urging the drafting of the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, Ukraine fully supports the activities of the ad hoc committee aimed at strengthening the Convention's legal regime. We stand for the universal application of the Convention and call upon all Member States to strictly abide by its provisions. Ukraine invites the international community to mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. We will submit the relevant draft resolution for consideration in the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly, and we hope that it will enjoy the support of Member States.

We are convinced that HIV/AIDS is one of the fundamental threats not only to human health and well-

being, but, in fact, to world security. We commend the efforts of the Secretary-General and the work carried out by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic. My country initiated the convening of the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, and strongly advocates the implementation of its recommendations. We support the proposal to hold a high-level meeting to review progress in this area next June.

In the area of the protection of human rights and the rule of law, we welcome the appointment of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. The international community must thoroughly study this phenomenon in order to prevent it from happening again.

Last year, the world marked the 70th anniversary of the horrible famine and genocide that took the lives of over seven million Ukrainians. I wish to express once again our profound gratitude to all the States that signed the joint statement on the seventieth anniversary of the Great Famine — Holodomor — of 1932 to 1933 in Ukraine and whose parliaments adopted acts of condemnation and expressed sympathy. We also express our appreciation to all organizations and individuals who took part in the events honouring the victims of the Great Famine.

Almost two decades have passed since Ukraine was struck by the Chernobyl catastrophe, the worst nuclear accident in the history of mankind, which took the lives of thousands of people and continues to have a negative impact on the health and well-being of many Ukrainians. Today, when assistance for recovery from Chernobyl is no less needed than 18 years ago, the international community cannot afford to weaken its efforts with the job half done, but should take practical steps for the sake of present and future generations. My country attaches special significance to the role of the United Nations in the strengthening of international cooperation in mitigating and minimizing the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. The United Nations strategy on Chernobyl, "The Human Consequences of the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident: A Strategy for Recovery," which was launched in 2002, has provided a constructive framework for reinvigorating international cooperation on Chernobyl. My delegation believes that the recent transfer of coordination functions for United Nations Chernobyl-related activities from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will stimulate further resource mobilization and enhance the impact of United Nations activities in this field.

Finally, I would like to highlight the fact that Ukraine, together with other interested delegations, presented an initiative to hold, in the framework of the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly, a special plenary meeting to commemorate the victims of the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, the Argentinian delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), which serves as a basis for our current deliberations.

My country would like to reiterate the fact that it values the work that the Organization has been doing with regard to bringing about the rule of law and justice in a multilateral context. Within this framework, we fully agree with the main themes of the Secretary-General's statement in the presentation of his report at the start of the general debate of this fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

Respect for international law is a necessary and indispensable condition for the achievement of harmony between nations and between peoples. Argentina therefore supports the peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council, the increasing number and complexity of which pose a serious challenge to the Organization's planning and deployment capabilities. Argentina remains committed to contributing troops and police personnel to the Organization's operations in that sphere. Only when we resolve the causes of violence, though, will we be able to attain full respect for international law.

In the area of international law, we would like to highlight the work of the international tribunals, in particular the International Criminal Court (ICC), the international community's principal tool in its fight against impunity. We support the Court, in particular the Office of the Prosecutor, in its task of investigating and bringing to trial those who have committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide when local authorities cannot or are not prepared to do so.

At the same time, my delegation would like to reaffirm its encouragement, support and readiness to cooperate with respect to the activities of the United

Nations system regarding the protection and promotion of human rights, including initiatives both to strengthen national human rights institutions and to improve and strengthen international mechanisms for monitoring universal respect for those rights.

Armed conflict and the growing number of natural disasters are causing the proliferation of humanitarian emergencies. Here, we consider that the coordinating role of the United Nations in providing assistance and humanitarian protection should be strengthened. Member States should contribute to this work of the Organization, consistent with their ability and circumstances. States should also guarantee full and unobstructed access for humanitarian personnel to populations affected by humanitarian crises.

The delegation of Argentina would also like to highlight the particular importance of the regional dimension of activities related to the rule of law, the peaceful settlement of disputes, the protection of human rights and humanitarian assistance. In particular, we would like to highlight the work being done in this area by the Organization of American States (OAS), and we consider that there should be greater, more consistent coordination with United Nations activities.

The slow progress in disarmament, violations of non-proliferation agreements, proof of the existence of a clandestine nuclear network and the threat of the use of weapons of mass destruction in terrorist activities endanger peace and international security and could lead to new cases of force being used in a unilateral or preventive fashion, something that Argentina does not want to see happen again. While we welcome the decision of a number of countries to renounce their programmes of weapons of mass destruction, and while we welcome support by States for the Chemical Weapons Convention, it is imperative that States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) address ongoing problems of non-compliance, make the Treaty stricter, and advance its universality.

We also consider that we must redouble our efforts to ensure that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) comes into force as soon as possible. Effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) would undoubtedly help supplement the work under way to reinforce the existing multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation systems.

We feel that the United Nations should continue to provide assistance in implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and in promoting the marking and tracing of small arms and the prevention, combating and eradication of illicit brokering in such weapons. Therefore, we urge the ratification of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

The alarming levels of poverty throughout the world not only affect the dignity and the survival of millions of human beings but also hinder the maintenance of international peace and security. The international community's actions to reduce the alarming levels of poverty, channelled principally through the eight Millennium Development Goals, will be insufficient if developed countries do not fulfil the commitments they undertook in the Monterrey Consensus and if they do not provide support for the actions being undertaken by developing countries. For Argentina, like many countries with medium income that do not receive official development assistance, a total eradication of poverty can be brought about only through a fair and just international trading system that will remove tariff and non-tariff barriers for all commodities.

In conclusion, the delegation of Argentina would like to reaffirm its support for the efforts of the Organization and of the Secretary-General in favour of a community of nations that recognizes the human being as the centre of its priorities and bases its action on the rule of law, the promotion of representative democracy, the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms and, fundamentally, multilateralism and interdependence as the only solid basis on which to build lasting international peace.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): I wish to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Malaysia to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and incisive report on the work of the Organization, as contained in document A/59/1. I should like to congratulate the Secretary-General in particular for his initiatives and perseverance to ensure that the United

Nations continues to have a central role in the multilateral decision-making process, in the maintenance of international peace and security and in the promotion of international cooperation.

As described in the report of the Secretary-General, events and developments occurring in the past year clearly demonstrated that the international community and the United Nations have had to confront many challenges throughout an extraordinarily challenging year. Most of those challenges require concerted efforts based on credible and effective multilateral cooperation and understanding premised on the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

The challenges of the maintenance of international peace and security; the further strengthening of international cooperation; the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals; the eradication of poverty and hunger; the promotion of trade and sustainable development; the provision of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; the promotion of human rights, democracy, good governance, justice and the rule of law, in particular in post-conflict societies; the fight against infectious diseases; and international efforts to combat terrorism: all of these remain enormous tasks for the United Nations and the international community. The Secretary-General has clearly envisioned the need for a more robust response. For this he has entrusted the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to make bold and practicable recommendations on policies, processes and institutions. My delegation has welcomed the establishment of the Panel and looks forward to its recommendations. We agree that the United Nations has to change in order to better meet current and future challenges and threats.

The call for reform of the United Nations continues to resonate in the General Assembly. During the recent general debate, leaders unanimously called upon Member States to take bold initiatives and steps to ensure a genuine reform and restructuring of the Organization. Reform has to be undertaken in a comprehensive, holistic and objective manner involving all organs and relevant bodies of the United Nations.

My delegation continues firmly to believe that the Security Council must be reformed and restructured to promote democratic practices in its decision-making which would reflect international geopolitical realities and the overall current membership of the United Nations. We wish to reiterate that, besides the question of an increase in the permanent and non-permanent membership categories of the Security Council, the rights and privileges accorded to members — in particular the veto power vested in the permanent members — must be seriously reviewed, with a view to phasing it out completely in due course.

Similarly, the process of revitalizing the General Assembly must continue. This includes making it possible for it to rectify an injustice brought about by the exercise of the veto power by a permanent member of the Security Council, for instance, by way of making certain types of resolutions in the General Assembly capable of setting aside a veto in the Security Council.

In his report, the Secretary-General has elaborated on several armed conflicts and their grim consequences and ramifications. Conflicts remain unresolved in the Middle East, while at the same time longstanding and new conflicts in the African region continue to require the international community's attention. The courageous efforts of the leaders of Africa — through, inter alia, the African Union, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism — to address the root causes of conflict and deploy the African Union's own peacekeeping forces in the continent must be commended and supported.

My delegation also takes note of the continuing efforts made by the United Nations and its agencies to assist Member States in addressing the root causes of conflict and in building their long-term capacity for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The increase in the number of peace- building and peacekeeping missions in the past year has also placed great strain on the Organization's resources and its capacity to plan, deploy and manage those missions.

In that regard, my delegation would like to urge Member States to positively respond to the call for sustained political support and for an increase in the financial commitment of Member States, to further ensure the success of United Nations peace-building and peacekeeping missions. We should not shy away from supporting and committing ourselves to the efforts and programmes that are being carried out under the auspices of the United Nations, be they attempts aimed at the prevention or resolution of

conflicts, the provision of humanitarian assistance in conflict areas, or post-conflict peace-building in accordance with the Charter. Malaysia remains committed to supporting United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building activities.

On the situation in the Middle East, Iraq is a clear example of a case where nations cannot go it alone, particularly in the reconstruction process and in efforts to bring about peace and security. Once again my delegation would like to stress that the United Nations has a role, and should be given that rightful role, to play in Iraq. As we see it, what is needed now is the collective will to enable the United Nations to undertake that responsibility in a secure and safe environment. This could then provide an incentive and an opportunity for the States Members of the United Nations to fulfil their obligations and assist Iraq in reconstruction and post-conflict peace-building efforts. Malaysia is prepared to participate under such circumstances.

My delegation strongly believes that the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine remain an important cornerstone of the work of the United Nations. Serious work needs to be done in the General Assembly and in the Security Council, and also by the Secretary-General. We are concerned that efforts in the Security Council have been blocked recently. We are equally concerned at the fact that there are also declared intentions to curtail United Nations activities concerning Palestine in respect of work done in the General Assembly and in subsidiary bodies created by it, as well as work done by the Secretariat and United Nations agencies. The historic advisory opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory was indeed a great achievement. However, it is most unfortunate, as well as unacceptable, that follow-up action to the advisory opinion has not been taken, including in the Security Council.

The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory remains volatile, and the humanitarian situation has deteriorated even further. There is no solution other than the end of Israeli occupation and the creation of a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, with Israel and Palestine coexisting peacefully side by side within secure and recognized borders.

The United Nations must be allowed to play a role, together with other members of the Quartet, to resuscitate the road map. At the same time the international community must also bring its full weight to bear in pushing for an independent and sovereign State of Palestine. To create an environment of confidence for the speedy resuscitation of the road map, we must seriously consider the approval of the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force or the placement of an international monitoring mechanism to oversee the implementation of the road map. Malaysia urges the Secretary-General to exert greater efforts in that connection.

Malaysia continues to be gravely concerned over terrorist acts and State terrorism, which are capable of undermining peace and security at the national, regional and international levels. Malaysia has extended, and will continue to extend, its full cooperation and support to international efforts to eliminate this scourge. However, my delegation continues to believe that this question warrants an appreciation of its complexity. The issue of terrorism should be approached in a comprehensive manner, namely by formulating a universally accepted definition, identifying its root causes and undertaking appropriate measures to deal with them, as well as working towards universalizing international legal instruments concerning this question. We maintain that the United Nations has a vital role to play in that regard, including in the convening of an international conference on terrorism.

On the threat to international security posed by all weapons of mass destruction, Malaysia is concerned at the slow pace of progress in the process of achieving complete and general disarmament, particularly as concerns nuclear weapons. We believe that, while the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction must be confronted, attention should not be diverted from the need to proceed speedily with the work on disarmament carried out within the United Nations. Malaysia believes also that the problem of small arms and light weapons, which have caused death and injury to millions of human beings, many of them innocent civilians and non-combatants, must continue to be seriously addressed. Efforts must be deployed to regulate and restrict the flow of small arms and light weapons to prevent illicit transfers.

A lot has been said at the United Nations about democracy, justice and the rule of law. My delegation

agrees that the promotion of democracy and good governance, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, are mutually reinforcing. While the rule of law and democratic principles are observed in our own countries, we must find genuine ways and means of ensuring that this is also observed in relations among States. The policy and practice of pursuing unilateral coercive measures as a means of exerting pressure on countries to achieve certain national objectives are clearly contrary to the fundamental principles of democracy, international law and the norms of international relations. They are also often counterproductive. The United Nations should be the forum for resolving such issues of collective concern.

Greater political will and a deeper commitment on all sides are needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. High levels of mortality and the uncontrollable spread of deadly diseases are important issues that require urgent attention. Similarly, the donor community should also increase humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of the millions of people affected by conflicts and natural disasters. This is where multilateral cooperation should work at its best: the rich helping the poor, with the poor committed to helping themselves. There has to be greater North-South cooperation in terms of trade, investment and financing for development. There also has to be a concerted effort to increase South-South cooperation. The United Nations can continue to help facilitate and even spearhead many of those efforts.

The recently launched initiative to reduce hunger and eradicate poverty, as contained in the New York Declaration on Action Against Hunger and Poverty of 20 September 2004, is highly commendable. Similarly, the forthcoming International Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be convened in Mauritius early next year, deserves the international community's serious attention and support. Clearly, the international community needs to act more vigorously to eradicate poverty and hunger, eliminate deadly diseases, promote sustainable development and narrow the digital divide. The United Nations system remains our hope for bringing our commitments to fruition.

In conclusion, our hope for a better, peaceful world for all remains with the United Nations. For almost six decades now, the United Nations has struggled to maintain its role as envisaged in the Charter, in spite of the imperfections, shortcomings and constraints generally imposed on it by none other than the Member States themselves. The United Nations is the beacon for multilateralism that needs to keep burning. It needs to be reformed and restructured according to the times and in keeping with current and future challenges. The Secretary-General has constantly reminded us of that.

We believe that under your guidance, Mr. President, the current session of the General Assembly will set the pace for the hard work that is required ahead. Let us respond to the Secretary-General's hope — as reflected in his report — that when we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations,

> "Member States, the Secretariat and other entities of the United Nations system, civil society and business organizations, as well as individuals around the world, will work together to ensure that the anniversary will be worthy of the United Nations and everything for which it stands." (*A/59/1, para. 297*)

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): The delegation of Indonesia is pleased to welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/59/1), which is his annual statement of the response of our Organization to international developments during the year. This report will serve as a good basis for our deliberations on issues of particular importance, especially in the light of next year's high-level meeting.

The Secretary-General has rightly pointed out that the United Nations has been through an extraordinarily challenging year. It has struggled with an assortment of challenges that include the situation in Iraq, terrorism, increased peacekeeping demands and humanitarian emergencies. On the eve of its sixtieth anniversary, our Organization continues to face the menace of poverty, disease and environmental issues.

Despite that, we are pleased that the Organization has continued to be involved in trying to improve the conditions of peoples around the world, in implementation of the Charter. It is gratifying that no matter the difficulties, the United Nations continues to be regarded as playing a central role in maintaining and building international peace and security. The report of the Secretary-General attests favourably to that characterization.

Next year, we will hold the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration and will review other recent major United Nations summits and conferences. Indonesia shares the view that efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals will succeed only if developed and developing countries adopt the right combination of national and international policies and implement their shared commitments as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation on sustainable development.

It is noteworthy that the report of the Secretary-General highlights the holistic approach with which the Organization has assisted vulnerable groups such as women, children, youth, refugees and internally displaced persons, people living with HIV/AIDS and migrants. Those efforts are imperative in helping Member States achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in particular by better coordinating and strengthening all agencies in order to connect the Goals to national policies and strategies.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, the report states that United Nations agencies have embarked on strengthening and coordinating their efforts at the country level. We believe that coordinated action and unified United Nations policy and programme support at the country level will contribute to the efforts to reverse the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS. However, we share the concern expressed by the Secretary-General that resources need to be increased substantially to enable countries to meet the goals set at the 2001 special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS.

In Indonesia, we have been mainstreaming Millennium Development Goals in our national development policy and strategies. The first Millennium Development Goals progress report, published last May, captures Indonesia's situation over the period from 1990 to 2003 and summarizes the challenges, policies and programmes relating to the realization of the objectives.

While we seek, and must continue to seek, the effectiveness of the United Nations in the execution of its mandate, we are all conscious of the point that the Organization must begin by being efficient in its methods and strong in its structures.

For too long, the reform of the United Nations has not progressed much. However, it is reform — not rhetoric — that can position our Organization to perform at its best. The objective of the reform must be to enhance multilateralism, which is the only vehicle through which the complex challenges before us today can be resolved. It is also the only way that the authority, the legitimacy and the credibility of the United Nations can continue to be respected throughout the world.

We must enhance the authority and the role of the General Assembly as the Organization's chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ, which is what it was designed to be. Its relationships with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council need to be strengthened with a view to ensuring increased cooperation, coordination and the complementarity of the work programmes of the three organs in accordance with their Charter mandates.

Indeed, we must make the Security Council more democratic by broadening its membership to realign it with the geopolitical realities of our time — not those of the post-war period of 1945. We must go further in this process by courageously facing related issues, such as permanent membership and the veto power, in order to make a representative, democratic, transparent, relevant and effective Council.

Similarly, the reform must go far enough to ensure that the role and the authority of the Economic and Social Council, as provided for in the Charter, are not only protected but strengthened. That will enable the Economic and Social Council to play its assigned role and be of key value as a multilateral tool for social and economic progress and development.

In our view, regional organizations are a ready source of support and assistance for the United Nations as it seeks to resolve those issues multilaterally. We believe that strong working partnerships with those organizations will go a long way towards complementing and extending the efforts of the United Nations. The Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) believes that a network of regional associations working with the United Nations would give a significant boost to the concept of multilateralism.

The strength of those organizations, in addition to being closer to the grassroots, is that they are also becoming more organized and more focused. At the ninth ASEAN Summit in Indonesia last year, for instance, members decided to establish an ASEAN Community, in line with ASEAN Vision 2020, which

will comprise three pillars of cooperation: political and security, economic and sociocultural. Not only can that organization be of greater effectiveness within ASEAN but it can greatly assist in implementing United Nations objectives in the area.

In this connection, permit me also to mention the New Strategic Partnership with the continent of Africa that Asia is promoting in the framework of South-South cooperation. This is the Asian-African Sub-regional Organizations Conference. The Partnership will be launched formally in Bandung, Indonesia, in 2005, in conjunction with the commemoration of the golden jubilee of the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference. We believe such structural partnerships can lead to more effective fulfilment of such multilateral objectives as the Millennium Development Goals and can complement various initiatives, in particular the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

On the subject of terrorism, I would like to restate that terrorism can be defeated, but the approach to seeking that victory must be multilateral and democratic. Efforts must be made to bring along all the nations of the world, because in the end, peace and security are a basic desire of every man and woman. It is also important that the offensive against terrorism be carried out with respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Finally, I want to express the appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary-General and to the staff of the United Nations Secretariat for this report and for the work they continue to do in support of peace and development.

Mr. Bshaina (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of Libya wishes to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the work of the Organization, contained in document A/59/1. This report clearly brings out the serious, unflagging, results-oriented efforts to reform and develop the Organization. This comprehensive report, welcomed by the international community, attempts to describe the current international situation, speaks of successes as well as failures in dealing with international events and challenges, and sets forth proposals for achieving more effective solutions in these areas.

In his report, the Secretary-General emphasizes the problems that the United Nations faces in carrying out its mandate in maintaining international peace and security and stresses the increase in demand for peacekeeping activities. We would like to say that State sovereignty must be respected; this principle cannot be violated. For this reason, we strongly oppose a country or group of countries interfering in the internal affairs of other countries under any pretext, including the so-called humanitarian interventions that have recently received certain support.

The United Nations Charter should be the only legal basis for all measures taken to preserve international security. All other actions undertaken outside of this framework are flagrant violations of all international instruments that regulate relationships among States.

The Charter specifically forbids threats or use of force and intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. It clearly details the proper ways of handling all humanitarian problems that might endanger international peace and sets forth the mechanism for this in the General Assembly. We continue to support the strengthening of the Charter's role in resolving international problems, including work in the maintenance of international peace and security. The international community should strive to oppose all attempts to act outside of internationally established mechanisms. To ignore this fact or to close one's eyes to it can serve as a pretext for intervention in the affairs of other States and would lead to the violation of the foundations of international order, including sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of a State.

The report spells out in detail the efforts undertaken to resolve international and regional conflicts and observes that many such conflicts have been resolved through negotiations. It states clearly that prospects for peace in Africa have improved, and in this respect I would like to thank the Secretary-General, on behalf of my country, for his support of African States in these efforts. However, we feel that more efforts must be made to resolve the remaining conflicts and to prevent all crises that could threaten what has already been achieved. We firmly believe that dealing with the root causes of Africa's problems can occur only through an overall approach, giving priority to what Africans see as Africa's concerns. This is why the work of the African Union to end conflicts and the funding required for it are the only solution to dealing with instability in certain States on the continent.

My delegation supports the ongoing revitalization efforts within the United Nations and calls for reform of the organs of our Organization. The General Assembly must work effectively and have the power that would allow it to have leadership and monitoring capabilities, as well as accountability for all other mechanisms and bodies of the Organization, including the Security Council. It is through transparency and respect for multilateralism that we can face the challenges of today's world.

Mr. Sow (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I am taking the floor for the first time before the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and would like to congratulate you upon your election as President.

The present debate provides me with the opportunity to express yet again to the Secretary-General the great appreciation of the Guinean Government for the quality of his leadership at the helm of our institution.

The report now being considered (A/59/1) is valuable in that it provides a thorough summary of what our Organization has done over the last 12 months to respond to the enormous challenges of today. It highlights the limitations and gaps, as well as the consolidation, the increase and breadth of activities conducted in all areas by the international community, particularly in the area of peace and security, economic and social development, humanitarian assistance, human rights and the struggle against all forms and manifestations of terrorism.

My country expresses its support for the positive and encouraging developments in the peace process in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the southern Sudan. Under the auspices of the African Union and its subregional organizations, an epoch of peace, stability and development is taking shape across the African continent that, until recently, had been ravaged by war, conflict, famine and underdevelopment.

My delegation would like to say that it is very pleased by the information and assessment mission carried out by the Security Council in West Africa from 20 to 29 June 2004. The thorough-going exchanges of views during the discussion on 28 June, in Conakry, between the President of the Republic of Guinea, General Lansana Conté, and the members of the Security Council on varied and complex issues certainly indicate both the determination of our Government to work tirelessly to restore peace and security in the Mano River basin and the Council's unflagging interest in helping Guinea to consolidate its peaceful and stabilizing influence in the subregion.

The Mano River Union Summit, held on 20 May and bringing together Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in Conakry, is part of this dynamic. In participating as observers at this summit, the presidents of Mali and Côte d'Ivoire emphasized their determination to work to strengthen peace in West Africa. Here, I would like to fulfil the important duty of reiterating the appeal launched on behalf of my country regarding the reconstruction of the forest zone, which for over 15 years has served as a temporary home for hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons.

In the Middle East, the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians is bogged down as never before. The joint efforts of the international community and the Quartet, in particular, remain futile. My country is now more concerned than ever by the situation in occupied Palestine. We call upon all the parties to fulfil their respective obligations under the road map. We support the idea that all final settlements on the issues of borders and refugees must be negotiated by the parties and be based on the international peace process plan. We condemn all terrorist acts in the region and demand that Israel, the occupying Power, fulfil its legal obligations, which are mentioned in the International Court of Justice's consultative opinion regarding the building of the separation wall.

We must recognize that achieving the goals mentioned in the United Nations Charter involves, among other things, strengthening the institutional capacities of our Organization in the area of conflict prevention and the restoration of peace. It is encouraging to see that this aspect is being taken into account by United Nations country teams on the ground as they develop their programmes, as indicated in paragraph 40 of the Secretary-General's report. My delegation also believes that the increase in the demand for United Nations peacekeeping activities, which is reflected in the creation of new missions, expresses the will of the Secretariat and the Security Council to effectively carry out their respective mandates. However, Guinea strongly believes that the effectiveness and success of United Nations

interventions in the areas of peacekeeping and peace-building are still linked to finding integrated regional approaches that take into account the interdependence of the causes and consequences of conflicts.

While the measures taken by the United Nations and various regional actors to protect peace and international security have allowed, in general, for the alleviation of the suffering of the millions of people who are victims of conflict, my country believes, as does the Secretary-General, that humanitarian aid is, alas, unequally distributed and, what is more, falls short of addressing the real needs of populations. The 20 per cent drop in the total number of refugees in the world between 2002 and 2004 is no justification for the drastic cuts in resources. Amendments must be immediately made to effectively mobilize and manage international humanitarian aid. The provision of international aid must also follow agreed upon principles, basing itself on coherency, effectiveness and accountability. In this context, it is up to the United Nations to pay particular attention to forgotten emergencies and to develop its rapid response systems.

Furthermore, my delegation would like to emphasize the need to constantly keep in mind that efforts under way in countries emerging from conflict must allow for the transition from humanitarian aid to development. In other words, better planning for transition in the countries concerned must be based on the development of a unified, coherent strategy for the entire United Nations system and of a permanent support mechanism for United Nations country teams.

My Government supports the efforts of the Secretary-General for Africa and the appeal to implement his recommendations contained in his 1998 report on the causes of conflicts and the promotion of sustainable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871). We must work, above all, to strengthen our Organization by supporting the Secretary-General's initiatives and innovative and courageous activities which are forward-looking in terms of reforming the main bodies of the United Nations. In this context, the efforts underway to carry out priorities agreed upon at the Millennium Summit and at world conferences in the framework of the United Nations activities continue to be an important and beneficial step in the right direction. Coordinated and sustained actions based on trust and on shared responsibility between the Organization and all of its partners are also necessary in order to reverse negative trends visible in the most vulnerable parts of the world and to promote the progress of all humanity. There is, therefore, a pressing need to continue to work in all areas toward reform, in particular in the main bodies of the Organization. The Republic of Guinea decisively commits itself to this.

Finally, as to the numerous challenges we face, I must mention the relevance of the basic values that underlie the goals of the United Nations through its Charter. Guinea believes that the preservation of these assets is one aspect of the primacy of the rule of law and multilateralism.

Mr. Diarra (Mali): Mr. President, my delegation would like to reiterate our support to you in the accomplishment of your duties. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the quality of his report and the relevance of his recommendations.

This report, like previous annual reports, calls our attention to old and new threats and challenges that the international community faces at the beginning of this twenty-first century. Of the 30 crises mentioned, more than half of them are of an intra-State nature. Very often, this involves the central Power confronting non-State armed groups, or conflicts between communities. These conflicts are fed by the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, by trafficking in natural resources and by the use of child soldiers. Today, there are 9.7 million refugees and 4.2 million displaced persons around the world because of these conflicts. In July 2004, 16 United Nations peacekeeping operations were deployed throughout the world, accounting for a total of more than 56,000 soldiers. Six of these operations are in Africa. These peacekeeping operations require the political support of Member States and financial and human resources that are very often lacking. This is particularly visible during the post-conflict phase, when the re-launching of the concerned States' economies is a necessary step in order to avoid the resurgence of confrontation. It is therefore appropriate that we reinforce the reconstruction aspect of peacekeeping operations.

Our Organization has understood that a regional approach is often best suited for managing those conflicts. Thus in West Africa the Special Representative of the Secretary-General assessed the crossborder impact of the conflicts raging in the region in order to find comprehensive solutions.

Our Organization has also formed partnerships with regional organizations to prevent and manage crisis situations. Thus, the United Nations has supported the African Union in the creation of the Peace and Security Council and of an African stand-by force. The partnership between the Economic Community of West African States and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa has also been strengthened.

However, in the end, the prevention of armed conflicts is the least onerous approach in terms of human and financial costs. In that regard, General Assembly resolution 57/337 commits the United Nations system to provide increased assistance to Member States to strengthen their capabilities, as well as the capabilities of local institutions and civil society, in the area of conflict prevention.

Current international and regional measures to combat the illicit trade in small arms are also an important factor in conflict prevention. The United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, the proposed international convention on marking and tracing of small arms and regional moratoriums and other codes of conduct are all praiseworthy initiatives.

Universal accession to the Ottawa Convention on landmines — which is the focus of the upcoming Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World — and the destruction of those mines by the countries that possess them would save thousands of lives in crisis-affected countries. In that context, we welcome the fact that 46 African countries have become parties to the Convention.

Intra-State conflicts often have their origins in chronic underdevelopment, the lack of social cohesion and the lack of political and economic governance. In that regard, comprehensive and coherent assistance from the United Nations to countries through the United Nations Development Group will assist implementation of the Millennium Development Goals at the national level.

The achievements of biotechnology and information and communication technologies are identified in the report as effective means for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It would therefore be useful to contribute to the success of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Tunis in November 2005. I am sure that at the Summit, proposals for the regulation of information technology and funds for overcoming the digital divide will meet with a response commensurate with our expectations, thus narrowing the digital divide between the North and the South.

The report also proposes effectively fighting hunger and poverty by strengthening the capacity of rural inhabitants and their organizations and improving their access to natural resources, technological means of production and to financial services.

In a country such as Mali, where 80 per cent of the working population lives in rural areas, it is necessary to invest in agriculture by improving water control technology and building rural infrastructure. The Economic and Social Council devoted part of its 2004 substantive session to studying that issue. In that context, we welcome the Council's ministerial declaration for resources mobilization for least developed countries. The Human Security Network adopted a declaration on food security last May in Bamako that shares that approach.

Mali endorses the 20 September declaration at the conclusion of the Summit for Action against Hunger and Poverty, an initiative of Brazil and France.

In addition to the lack of rural infrastructure, which seriously hinders development, other natural factors such as cyclical drought and locust plagues exacerbate the already precarious situation of the peoples of the Sahel. The support of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is valuable, but the FAO requires material support to help those people. Therefore, the international community must act quickly.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals also requires universalizing access to quality primary education. Today, 121 million children throughout the world, including 65 million girls, do not attend school.

Improving medical coverage through the establishment of a national programme for a health decade is also part of ongoing efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. That is another important initiative that the Government of Mali has launched as part of its strategic framework to combat poverty.

To deal with the threat of HIV/AIDS, Mali has launched an ambitious multisectoral programme with the assistance of its partners. The programme

encompasses prevention, treatment and social integration of those affected. In that context, we welcome the actions of our international partners to combat infectious diseases, which are the new threat to developing interactions among States.

We welcome the effective action of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, which was created to deal with the special needs of the vulnerable economies of those countries.

The situation of those countries, a group to which my country belongs, requires a substantial increase in official development assistance and a significant reduction — if not the complete cancellation — of those countries' external debt.

We must also ensure the integration of those vulnerable economies in a more equitable international trade system that is more predictable and more respectful of regulations. That would benefit the sectors of our economies that have a comparative advantage. The Cotton Initiative provides an example.

We welcome the 1 August 2004 framework agreement of the General Council of the World Trade Organization, which gives special treatment to the issue of cotton among the issues related to agricultural subsidies. The contribution of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to strengthen the negotiating capabilities of those countries is also greatly appreciated.

In conclusion, the developments I have mentioned concerning issues of interest to my country amply demonstrate the relevance of multilateralism and the need to find collective solutions. My delegation believes that strengthening the rule of law and respect for human rights must continue to be the cardinal values of the Organization. Humankind's well-being must be the goal of all our initiatives. We must protect the moral and physical integrity of human beings, who must be freed from both need and fear. That is the aim of the Human Security and also the belief of my country, Mali.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.